

looking forwards,
looking backwards

/ James Saunders

/ 2023

Written for Penny and Anna Norton as a birthday present, 30 April 2023.

violin and piano

duration: variable

This piece is part of a series of labyrinth pieces I've been working on recently, which ask the players to find a route through a series of paths in a melodic line. In *looking forwards, looking backwards*, the violin and piano are asked to navigate to particular points in the line and wait for each other there, before continuing to the next point. Sometimes the routes are straightforward, but at other times more complex and take longer to follow. The title relates to the planning needed by the players to work out their movement, and also to the fact this is a birthday present for Penny Norton to play with her daughter Anna, and the sense that birthdays give as moments of recollection and anticipation.

PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

The piece involves the two players proceeding independently through their part, trying to find a route so that they both arrive at the same circled numbers (which have the same pitch).

The players may arrive at the same number at the same time, or one may arrive before the other, but should generally be fairly close together.

When both players have arrived at the same number, wait a moment, and then continue on to the next number in the sequence in the same manner. The violin should sustain the pitch, and the piano should repeat it slowly, waiting for it to almost die away each time.

Parts may move together or independently.

The movement is mainly slow, at c.2-5 seconds per pitch, or much longer. Movement may be regular or irregular.

At least one part should be audible at all times, but one player may drop out briefly for a short while.

The loop brackets constrain the paths through the material, making it more of a puzzle to find a way to reach the next numbered point.

The brackets interlock, providing ways to move forwards or jump backwards through the material.

For example, in the excerpt below, the following repeats are possible:

A-C
B-C
B-E
D-E
D-G
F-G etc.

The musical notation shows a sequence of notes on a staff. Above the staff, points A, B, C, D, E, F, and G are marked. Point A is circled with the number 1. Point D is circled with the number 5. Point F is circled with the number 4. Notes at B and E are marked with '8ve'. Loop brackets connect the notes: A to C, B to C, B to E, D to E, and F to G. The notes are: A (C#), B (D), C (E), D (F#), E (G), F (A#), G (B#).

So to move from the high F#/C# at the end of the excerpt to the C# at number 1, the route could be F-G-D-E-B-C-A-[1], or other more circuitous routes.

Repeats may happen any number of times, or be ignored and played through to the next pitch.

The piece may finish on reaching any of the numbered points.

For longer performances, either find more circuitous routes or continue until one of the higher numbers is reached.

Hold the final numbered pitch for c.10 seconds, or longer.

8ve markings in the piano refer only to the note they are attached to.

Dynamics are free, but generally quiet.

looking forwards, looking backwards

/ James Saunders

/ 2023

violin

piano

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8ve

I. II.

Detailed description: This image shows a musical score for violin and piano. The violin part is written on a single staff in treble clef, featuring a sequence of notes with circled fingerings (1-7) and repeat signs. The piano part is on a single staff in treble clef, with notes and fingerings (1-7) and '8ve' markings. The score is divided into two sections, I. and II., with a double bar line between them. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.